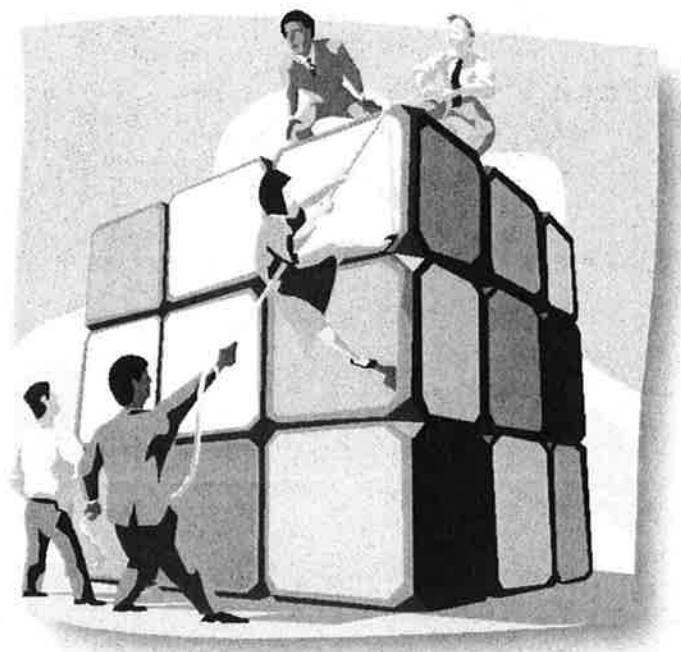


Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy

Understanding My Strengths and Needs



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SELF DETERMINATION

What is Self-Determination?

Self determination is many things. It is not something you can touch, but it is a unique blending of your thoughts and actions. It is a combination of knowing yourself, what you need or want, setting goals, and developing a way to achieve those goals. It is a process, a gradual process of growing. Self determination is personal growth, which may seem to be slow moving to you at times. But with determination, patience, and support you will begin to make responsible choices and decisions, which will affect the direction your life will take. There may be rough spots along the way, as well as times when decisions seem easy to make.

What is important? It is important to identify your goals and plan well to achieve them.

Examples of questions you may ask yourself while determining what you need and want (self- determination) are questions such as:

- What do I want to do after graduating from high school?
- What are my goals?
- What are my strengths? What do I do well?
- What are my needs? What things are more difficult for me?
- What are my interests and hobbies? What do I enjoy doing?
- What are my dreams?
- What can I imagine myself doing in one year, two years, or five years?

"Self-determination is a combination of knowing yourself, what you need or want, setting goals, and developing a way to achieve those goals."

Self determination for each of us is as unique as we are unique as individuals. It is different for everyone.

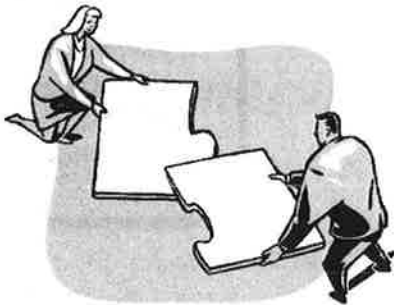
You will learn ways to identify goals as well as obstacles, which are those things that may get in the way of you reaching your goals. Over time you will develop skills to solve problems and move forward in reaching your goals. Self-determination is the process of growing into an adult and making adult-like choices and decisions. As you mature, you develop skills to communicate better, solve problems, and understand yourself and others.

What are self-determination skills?

Self-determination may sound like something which is complicated, but you probably use self-determination skills every day and don't realize it. These skills include setting goals, developing plans to reach your goals, identifying problems, finding solutions (problem solving), and making decisions.

Examples:

- Choosing what classes you are going to take in high school requires you to use self-determination skills. You choose classes based on your likes and dislikes. You also know that you need a certain number of credits to graduate. You identify your interests at first and then develop a plan to achieve your goals. When you choose particular classes you are really planning for what you want to do after you graduate from high school. It is like putting pieces of a puzzle together.
- If you are shopping for a birthday gift for someone in your family or a friend, you are using self-determination skills by choosing how much you will spend, what gift you will buy, and where you will buy the gift.



It's like Putting Pieces of a Puzzle Together!

In fact, you use self-determination skills every day when you choose what you want to eat for lunch. You have thought about what you want to eat based on what you may be hungry for, or what may be good for you. You either have money to buy lunch or you have packed it. Again, you are thinking about what you need or want, and how you are going to get it.

If you are a student who is considering going to a technical school or college after graduation, self-determination will play a major role in the decisions and choices you make.

You may ask yourself questions such as:

- What type of school do I want to attend: trade school, technical school, two or four year college?
- Where do I want to live while attending school? What are my options?
- What are my financial options? Will I receive grants, scholarships, or financial support from a government agency? Are my parents able to pay for my education?
- What type of support will I need academically to be successful?

You may already know the answer to some of these questions or there may be questions listed here you have not considered.



Your parents or guardians are an important part of the decision making process.

Take advantage of their experience and the ideas they may express. Your teachers, guidance counselor, transition coordinator, or someone you trust can offer suggestions and guidance as you make decisions. *These people are your support system.*

But I don't know what I want to do...



That's okay.

High school can be a time of excitement, but it may also be a time of uncertainty. Wondering what the future may hold for you can be frightening, if you are unsure of the decisions you have made so far or the lack of decisions you are making. You are setting out on a journey that you have not taken before. It is understandable if you are unsure or scared.

You may be afraid of making decisions because you are afraid of failing. But failing does not mean you have not succeeded. Through your experiences you are learning and developing problem solving skills, and through your successes you are building confidence.

Seek out the advice and opinions of your parents or other family members for support and guidance in helping you determine what you need or want for yourself. You may want to discuss the questions on page 2 with them.

There are no right or wrong answers. It is not a test.

It is a starting point in identifying your needs, strengths and goals. Then, you can begin to plan how to achieve your goals.

SELF-ADVOCACY

What is Self-Advocacy?

Self-advocacy is expressing what you need or want. The important key is to express yourself respectfully and appropriately. You may think of it as a tool by which you express what you know about yourself, and what you have learned about yourself through practicing self-determination.

Developing skills to communicate your needs and wants to other people in a way that is appropriate is one component of self-advocacy. As a student, you are communicating with adults who are in a position of power, like teachers and principals, as well as your parents.

How you communicate is as important as what you communicate.

Identifying a thought or emotion you would like to communicate is the first step. Think of how you will say what you want to say. Your goal is to communicate your needs or wants and do so in a way that is positive. An adult will most often respond to respect with respect. If they do not respond positively, then practice respect because it will serve you well through your lifetime.

What is Effective Communication?

Effective communication is:

- Listening to what someone is saying
- Waiting until the person is finished speaking
- Paying attention to nonverbal cues (body language), and
- Making eye contact

Jumping to conclusions, losing your temper, and name calling are a few of the behaviors you want to avoid when communicating with anyone.

Remember, your goal is to communicate your needs and wants appropriately.

CONCLUSION



Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy

Work Together!

Self-determination and self-advocacy work together. Practicing self-determination and developing effective self-advocacy skills will help you to make choices based upon your wants and needs, and provide you with an appropriate way to say what you are thinking and feeling.

Understanding My Strengths and Needs

As a partner in the transition planning process, you contribute insight about your strengths and learning needs while acknowledging weaknesses and needs. Try to direct time and energy into preparing for such meetings by brainstorming the **strengths** that you display at home and in the community. These strengths may be in areas other than academics. Keep in mind that transition planning involves more than academics. Identify hobbies, interests, interpersonal skills, or other abilities you show away from school that school personnel may not see or be aware of.

The following checklist is designed to help you look at your abilities in all phases of transition planning. Completing the checklist will prepare you to serve as an informed and knowledgeable partner in the evaluation and planning process. The more you discover about your abilities the better prepared you'll be to advocate for an educational program which will best meet your needs. **It is important to remember that you are an equal member of the evaluation team making recommendations for your program.**



TRANSITION CHECKLIST: Assessing Your Strengths and Needs

.....

Goal planning will depend on your level of functioning in activities related to adult living. Assessing strengths and needs will help you to identify the areas in which you would like school assistance.

Because needs and capabilities vary for students, the following checklist covers a sampling of very basic skills to higher levels of independence. The checklist is not a complete listing of skills. It is designed to help you think of additional areas which may also be important to your independent functioning. **Not all areas will apply to you.** Any negative responses to statements in the following charts should be considered when developing your IEP and Transition Plan.

| Activity | Completes Activity Independently? | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| | yes | no | sometimes | needs help | not tried | Comments: |
| INDEPENDENT LIVING | | | | | | |
| 1. Reviews newspaper for apartment availability | | | | | | |
| 2. Calls for details about rental | | | | | | |
| 3. Understands rental/leasing agreements | | | | | | |
| 4. Understands rental insurance | | | | | | |
| 5. Understands how to purchase/lease a car | | | | | | |

| Activity | Completes Activity Independently? | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| | yes | no | sometimes | needs help | not tried | Comments: |
| Independent Living (continued) | | | | | | |
| 6. Understands car insurance | | | | | | |
| 7. Understands money management and budgeting | | | | | | |
| 8. Understands process of making decisions | | | | | | |
| 9. Utilizes assistive devices or technology | | | | | | |
| WORK | | | | | | |
| Finding a Job | yes | no | sometimes | needs help | not tried | Comments: |
| 1. Has job searching skills | | | | | | |
| 2. Adequately fills out a job application | | | | | | |
| 3. Has skills to develop a resume | | | | | | |
| 4. Has interview skills | | | | | | |
| 5. Has knowledge/contact with adult employment support services and civil service requirements | | | | | | |
| 6. Understands the need for transportation to work | | | | | | |
| 7. Understands the legal requirements if chose to disclose a disability | | | | | | |
| 8. Can identify needed accommodations at work | | | | | | |
| On the Job Skills | yes | no | sometimes | needs help | not tried | Comments: |
| 1. Follows verbal instructions | | | | | | |
| 2. Follows written instructions | | | | | | |
| 3. Completes work with supervision | | | | | | |
| 4. Checks own work | | | | | | |
| 5. Corrects mistakes | | | | | | |
| 6. Remains in work area until work is complete | | | | | | |

| Activity | Completes Activity Independently? | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| | yes | no | sometimes | needs help | not tried | Comments: |
| On the Job Skills (continued) | | | | | | |
| 7. Requests more work when needed | | | | | | |
| 8. Has basic reading, math, measuring skills | | | | | | |
| 9. Has acquaintance with computers and their applications | | | | | | |
| 10. Has on the job experience | | | | | | |
| Workplace Skills | yes | no | sometimes | needs help | not tried | Comments: |
| 1. Able to explain a problem to a supervisor | | | | | | |
| 2. Able to ask a question | | | | | | |
| 3. Able to ask for vacation/ time off | | | | | | |
| 4. Accepts/provides a compliment | | | | | | |
| 5. Accepts negative feedback | | | | | | |
| 6. Accepts criticism appropriately | | | | | | |
| 7. Apologizes for errors | | | | | | |
| 8. Gives constructive criticism | | | | | | |
| 9. Able to ask for help from supervisor | | | | | | |
| 10. Accepts help | | | | | | |
| 11. Offers help | | | | | | |
| Workplace Social Skills | yes | no | sometimes | needs help | not tried | Comments: |
| 1. Knows how to handle teasing | | | | | | |
| 2. Knows how to handle rejection | | | | | | |
| 3. Respects the opinions, customs and differences of others | | | | | | |

Activity**Completes Activity Independently?**

| COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES | | | | | | |
|---|-----|----|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Group/Community/School Activities | yes | no | sometimes | needs help | not tried | Comments: |
| 1. Participates in clubs/extra-curricular activities in school | | | | | | |
| 2. Volunteers/ participates in community activities (YMCA/ YWCA, community centers, hospitals, nursing homes, fire companies, etc.) | | | | | | |
| 3. Takes music lessons | | | | | | |
| 4. Takes part in social clubs, adult recreation clubs, church activities | | | | | | |
| 5. Uses library | | | | | | |
| 6. Goes to park | | | | | | |
| 7. Goes to museum | | | | | | |
| 8. Goes to movies | | | | | | |
| 9. Goes to/participates in sports events | | | | | | |
| 10. Selects activity to attend from newspaper | | | | | | |
| 11. Calls activity to discover start time, if needed | | | | | | |
| 12. Has transportation to activity | | | | | | |
| 13. Pays for activity independently | | | | | | |
| 14. Knows how to ask peer to event | | | | | | |
| 15. If invited, decides if activity fits plans | | | | | | |
| 16. Tells peer if not able to attend | | | | | | |
| 17. Interacts appropriately with others participating in the activity | | | | | | |
| 18. Uses appropriate behavior at activity | | | | | | |
| 19. Knows basic legal rights and responsibilities of citizenship | | | | | | |
| 20. Understands procedures for voting | | | | | | |

Activity**Completes Activity Independently?**

| INDIVIDUAL LEISURE ACTIVITIES | | | | | | |
|---|------------|-----------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Individual Activities | yes | no | sometimes | needs help | not tried | Comments: |
| 1. Colors/paints | | | | | | |
| 2. Does puzzles | | | | | | |
| 3. Reads/looks at books, magazines | | | | | | |
| 4. Listens to music | | | | | | |
| 5. Operates radio, CD player, iPod | | | | | | |
| 6. Watches television | | | | | | |
| 7. Operates TV | | | | | | |
| 8. Operates VCR/DVD/DVR | | | | | | |
| 9. Does photography | | | | | | |
| 10. Sews, crochets, or knits | | | | | | |
| 11. Maintains stamp, card, coin, etc. collection | | | | | | |
| 12. Does crafts | | | | | | |
| 13. Has a hobby | | | | | | |
| 14. Swims | | | | | | |
| 15. Walks/runs for enjoyment | | | | | | |
| 16. Exercises for enjoyment | | | | | | |
| 17. Goes camping, fishing, hunting, boating, hiking | | | | | | |
| 18. Plans a vacation | | | | | | |
| 19. Packs for vacation | | | | | | |
| 20. Chooses own leisure activities | | | | | | |
| 21. Understands own interests | | | | | | |

| Activity | Completes Activity Independently? | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| HIGHER EDUCATION OR TRAINING | yes | no | sometimes | needs help | not tried | Comments: |
| 1. Understands own strengths and needs | | | | | | |
| 2. Understands nature of challenges posed by the disability | | | | | | |
| 3. Understands SAT and placement exam accommodations | | | | | | |
| 4. Has explored post high school options including military service | | | | | | |
| 5. Understands special accommodations necessary for his/her learning/physical access to facilities | | | | | | |
| 6. Is aware of options available for continuing education at a 2 or 4 year college/university or technical school or military program | | | | | | |
| 7. Has contacted supported services at post secondary level | | | | | | |
| 8. Able to complete an application for higher education | | | | | | |
| 9. Able to respond to possible interview questions for higher education | | | | | | |
| 10. Has good organizational skills | | | | | | |
| 11. Has good time-management skills | | | | | | |
| 12. Has good library and research skills | | | | | | |
| 13. Has good computer/word processing skills | | | | | | |
| 14. Has basic academic skills | | | | | | |
| 15. Has an updated evaluation with complete IQ testing completed within the junior, senior year | | | | | | |

| Activity | Completes Activity Independently? | | | | | Comments: |
|--|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| ADULT SERVICES | yes | no | sometimes | needs help | not tried | |
| 1. Has an open case with County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Base Service Unit | | | | | | |
| 2. Has an open case with Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) | | | | | | |
| 3. Has observed various living arrangements or met with residential providers | | | | | | |
| 4. Has met with various vocational providers | | | | | | |
| 5. Has contacted Center for Independent Living (CIL) | | | | | | |
| 6. Understands procedures to obtain services through providers | | | | | | |
| 7. Has met with a Social Security claims representative to open a case or to have an explanation of how benefits will be when going to a job | | | | | | |
| 8. Has explored Public Assistance, if applicable | | | | | | |

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